contemporary records we catch a glimpse of lessons in its use being given to the navigators before they put out to sea. Such, indeed, was the impression that this new experiment created that it is referred to by Camoens in his *Lusiads,* the greatest Portuguese epic poem, in flowing verse.

The ultimate object of the great mediaeval voyages of discovery was to find a more convenient route to India. While Bartholomew Diaz with his two tiny caravels was ploughing his way south by sea towards the Cape of Good Hope, two other audacious pioneers, Joao Perez of Covilha and Alfonso de Paiva, were despatched eastward to investigate the overland route; with them, they took among their equipment maps made by Behaim's two Jewish collaborators. Subsequently, two Jews were despatched in their wake—Joseph Qapateiro of Lamego, who had great experience of Eastern travel and had presented the King a report on Ormuz, the emporium of the Indian spice-trade, and Rabbi Abraham of Beja, whose knowledge of languages was considered remarkable. At Cairo, they met Joao Perez, now on his way back from India: his companion had died meanwhile, leaving his last instructions to a faithful Jew who had accompanied him in his travels.

Rabbi Abraham remained with Perez, going as far as Ormuz and then returning by the caravan route *via* Damascus and Aleppo. Joseph, on the other hand, was despatched hotfoot back to Lisbon. With him he brought all the information amassed from Arabian and Indian

pilots which pointed to the existence of a sea-route to the Far East. Armed with this information, with the Majorcan maps, with Vecinho's tables and with Zacuto's improved astrolabe, Vasco da Gama set out on the epoch-making voyage which was to result in the discovery of the sea-route to India.